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RQ

January 31, 2004

Ms. Rini Ghosh
Surface Transportation Board
Case Control Unit
1925 K Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20423-001

RE: STB Finance Docket # 34284

FD 34284

Dear Ms. Ghosh:

Thank you for sending me the Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Southwest Gulf Railroad Company's proposed construction and operation of a seven-mile rail line in Medina County, Texas. I strongly agree with the decision of the Surface Transportation Board (STB) to require an EIS for this highly controversial project. I also appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft scope document and will send those comments under separate cover.

As you are aware, I have been working closely with the Medina County Environmental Action Association, Inc. to assist them in their efforts to express their concerns to the STB. It is important for the STB to understand that most of the citizens in Medina County are not well-versed in environmental regulations, environmental technology, or the EIS process. Further, most Medina County citizens do not fully understand the proposed project and thus are unable to identify issues of concern to them and their neighbors. With this fact in mind, I would like to formally request that the STB conduct a minimum of three public workshops to explain the Southwest Gulf Railroad project and to provide an open forum for discussion of issues of concern by the public.

In my experience, highly controversial projects require a great deal of public involvement and education in order to gain public confidence in the lead agency. I feel that these public meetings would be of great benefit to both the STB and Medina County citizens.

I sincerely appreciate your consideration of this formal request and look forward to hearing your response.

Very truly yours,

Lynn M. Kitchen, Ph.D.
Principal Scientist